

Netherlands Extradites Russian Accused of Overseeing Shipments of Cocaine Stashed in Bananas

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Traffickers have used bananas to ship cocaine from Latin America to Europe. **uk home office**

Dutch authorities have handed over to Russia a man accused of masterminding a major drug operation that saw millions of dollars' worth of cocaine smuggled into Russia hidden in banana shipments.

The crime ring, operating since 2003, was busted in 2010, but its alleged leader Vladimir Krasavchikov fled prosecution, Russia's Interior Ministry said Saturday.

Krasavchikov was held in the Netherlands in early 2012, but extradition formalities took two years to accomplish, the ministry said in a statement.

The group was stashing away bags of cocaine on transatlantic ships ferrying bananas from Ecuador to St. Petersburg, police said.

Upon arrival, drug couriers disguised as longshoremen picked up the cocaine, leaving ship crews unaware of the extra cargo.

About 70 kilograms of cocaine worth \$85 million was seized during the crackdown on the operation in 2010, implying far bigger long-term profits for the group.

The ministry did not specify criminal charges against Krasavchikov, but drug trafficking is punishable with up to 20 years behind bars in Russia.

Nine alleged accomplices of Krasavchikov were already slapped with prison terms in Russia.

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